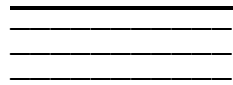

NEWS LETTER



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Planners Pen

PLANNERS PEN FOLLOWUP BULLETIN: January 2002

We are now pleased to present an additional headline item that could not be crowded into the November issue of Planners Pen. That issue did, however, make note of the fact that an article on API Conference 2001 (Newfoundland) would be posted in the near future. We are grateful to Elaine Mitchell, Conference Chair and long-time supporter of API, for providing this item reporting an engaging and successful conference.

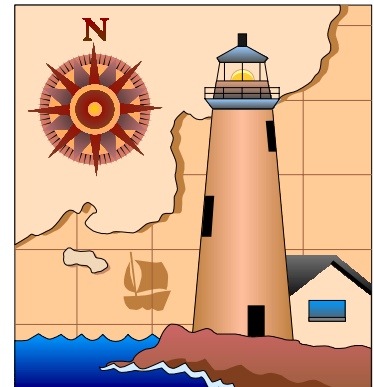
We would be remiss if we did not also express our thanks to API webmaster Mark Poirier for his capable handling of our website communications enterprise.

As always, we invite you to e-mail your comments and observations to Dennis Friesen <dfriesen@isn.net>

All such communications will be conveyed to API Council.

INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC CONSULTATION APU•IUA 2001 CONFERENCE ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND 11-13 OCTOBER, 2001

Responding to the call by members for increased professional development opportunities, API Council asked the Newfoundland and Labrador Branch to incorporate such a focus into the 2001 annual conference. The Branch responded to this challenge by abandoning the traditional conference format and inviting Dr. Mark Seasons to facilitate a two day professional development workshop exploring the concepts and principles of public consultation.



INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC CONSULTATION, held on October 11 to 13, 2001 in St. John's, Newfoundland, attracted 39 participants from across the Atlantic provinces. 24 members of API attended. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds including park planners, municipal planners, a city councillor, community activists, consultants as well as planners from the public sector.

The workshop, through short lectures presented by Mark Seasons, and group discussion covered:

- governance and decision making trends;
- concepts and principles of consultation;
- traditional and advanced consultation methods;
- managing the process; and
- best practice.

While the workshop reviewed the use of traditional consultation methods such as advertising, open houses and meetings as well as more innovative techniques such as visioning, focus groups and brainstorming sessions, several important themes were prevalent through both days of presentations and discussion:

- establish clear parameters during the development of the consultation program and clearly communicate those expectations through-out the process - nothing is more frustrating than participating in a process where the outcome is unclear and the input ignored.
- in order to engage all sectors of the community be prepared to use several consultation methods.
- each consultation process must be tailored to meet the circumstances at hand. For each consultation exercise, thought must be given to how to identify and engage various audience groups; the appropriate consultation methods; the resources required; and methods of feedback. Meaningful input will not be forthcoming if a single consultation method is relied on to gather input on all issues - different issues require different techniques.
- organization culture must be receptive to input through consultation and must made a clear place for consultation in decision making - why consult if no one is going to consider the results?

Mark engaged all participants by provoking lively discussions. The workshop was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences with other planning practitioners and to learn from each other. We had the opportunity to put our skills and knowledge to work with a case study exercise.

Unfortunately, there was little emphasis given to the use of new media, such as electronic chat rooms, in consultation. Perhaps such techniques could be the focus of a future professional development opportunity?

Of course, the Newfoundland and Labrador Branch organized a lively social programme. One evening was spent on a theatrical walking tour through the historic and haunted streets of downtown St. John's ending up at a local "haunted" pub. A relaxing barbeque was held in Bowering Park on the second night.

Both API and the Newfoundland and Labrador Branch financially supported this new initiative by donating \$1,000 each. The City of Mount Pearl donated \$500 while the City of St. John's provided

the Saturday lunch. The Honourable Oliver Langdon, Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, sponsored the Friday lunch and attended to give a few words on planning within the province.

These various donations allowed the conference to refund the seed money provided by API and the Branch and to make a small profit of approximately \$2,000. This profit will be split between the Branch and API Council.

Thanks should be given to the API•IUA 2001 conference organizing committee. Stephen Jewczyk, Corrie Davis, Roland Burek, Karen Roberts, Stan Clinton, Kim Blanchard and Ed Kaufhold put in long hours and concentrated effort that made this conference a success. Thanks should also be given to Dr. Mark Seasons whose engaging material and lively facilitation skills made the workshop such a valuable learning experience.

All in all, the concept of using the annual API conference as a professional development workshop was well received and, hopefully, future conference will decide to devote a portion of the proceedings to similar initiatives.

Respectfully submitted:

Elaine Mitchell MCIP
Conference Chair